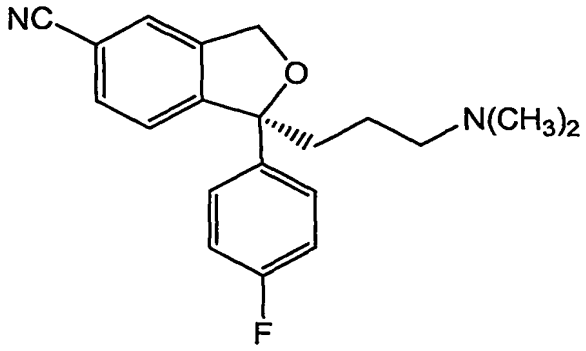
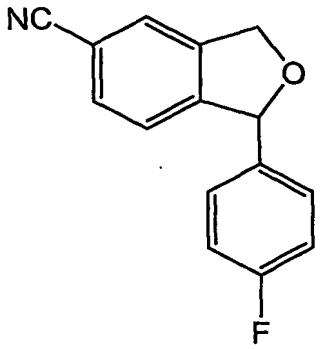
CLAIMS:

1. A process for preparing escitalopram having the structure:



comprising the steps of:

(a) reacting 5-cyano-1-(4-fluorophenyl)-1,3-dihydroisobenzofuran having the structure:



with 3-chloropropylamine in the presence of a base;

(b) reacting a product from (a) with an enantiomerically pure acid;

(c) hydrolyzing a product from (b) using a base;

(d) methylating a product recovered from (c); and

(e) recovering escitalopram.

2. The process of claim 1, wherein an enantiomerically pure acid is a di-benzoyltartaric acid, a di-p-toluoyl tartaric acid, an o-nitrobenzoyl tartaric acid, lactic acid, bisnaphthylphosphoric acid, 10–camphorsulfonic acid, 8–camphorsulfonic acid, malic acid, N-acetyl glutamic acid, or mandelic acid.

3. The process of claim 1, wherein an enantiomerically pure acid is (-)-di-p-toluoyl tartaric acid.

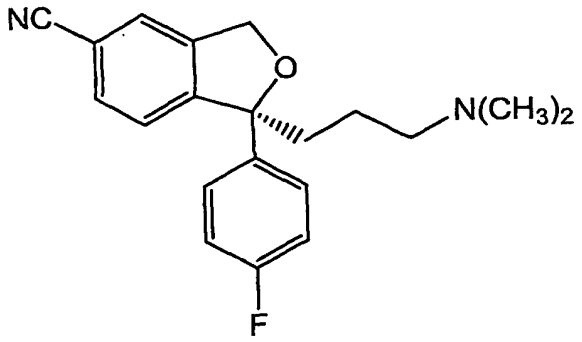
4. The process of claim 1, wherein a product from (c) is methylated using methyl iodide, dimethyl sulfate or a mixture of formic acid and formaldehyde.

5. The process of claim 1, wherein a product from (c) is methylated using a mixture of formic acid and formaldehyde.

6. The process of claim 5, wherein recovered escitalopram contains less than about 0.2 weight percent of N-{3-[5-cyano-1-(4-fluorophenyl)-1,3-dihydro-2-benzofuran-1-yl] propyl} formamide.

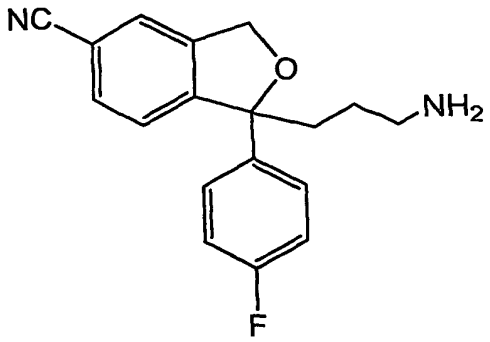
7. The process of claim 5, wherein recovered escitalopram contains less than about 0.01 weight percent of N-{3-[5-cyano-1-(4-fluorophenyl)-1,3-dihydro-2-benzofuran-1-yl] propyl} formamide.

8. A process for preparing escitalopram having the structure:



comprising the steps of:

(a) reacting 5-cyano-1-(4-fluorophenyl)-1-aminopropyl-1,3-dihydroisobenzofuran having the structure:



with an enantiomerically pure acid;

(b) hydrolyzing a product from (a) using a base;

(c) methylating a product recovered from (b); and

(d) recovering escitalopram.

9. The process of claim 8, wherein an enantiomerically pure acid is a di-benzoyltartaric acid, a di-p-toluoyl tartaric acid, an o-nitrobenzoyl tartaric acid, lactic acid, bisnaphthylphosphoric acid, 10–camphorsulfonic acid, 8–camphorsulfonic acid, malic acid, N-acetyl glutamic acid, or mandelic acid.

10. The process of claim 8, wherein an enantiomerically pure acid is (-)-di-p-toluoyl tartaric acid.

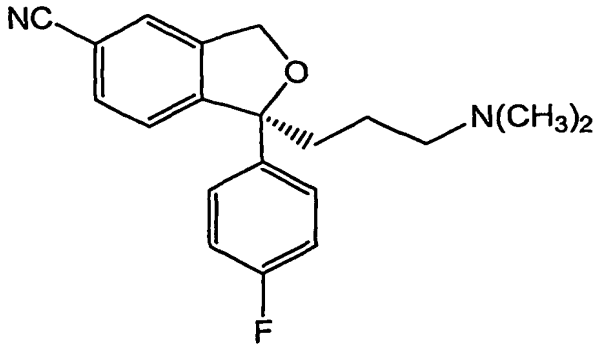
11. The process of claim 8, wherein a product from (b) is methylated using methyl iodide, dimethyl sulfate or a mixture of formic acid and formaldehyde.

12. The process of claim 8, wherein a product from (b) is methylated using a mixture of formic acid and formaldehyde.

13. The process of claim 12, wherein recovered escitalopram contains less than about 0.2 weight percent of N-{3-[5-cyano-1-(4-fluorophenyl)-1,3-dihydro-2-benzofuran-1-yl] propyl} formamide.

14. The process of claim 12, wherein recovered escitalopram contains less than about 0.01 weight percent of N-{3-[5-cyano-1-(4-fluorophenyl)-1,3-dihydro-2-benzofuran-1-yl] propyl} formamide.

15. A process for preparing escitalopram having the structure:



comprising the steps of:

(a) reacting racemic citalopram with an enantiomerically pure acid;

(b) hydrolyzing a product from (a), using a base; and

(c) recovering escitalopram.

16. The process of claim 15, wherein an enantiomerically pure acid is a di-benzoyltartaric acid, a di-p-toluoyl tartaric acid, an o-nitrobenzoyl tartaric acid, lactic acid, bisnaphthylphosphoric acid, 10–camphorsulfonic acid, 8–camphorsulfonic acid, malic acid, N-acetyl glutamic acid, or mandelic acid.

17. The process of claim 15, wherein an enantiomerically pure acid is (-)-di-p-toluoyl tartaric acid.

18. The process of claim 15, wherein recovered escitalopram contains less than about 0.2 weight percent of N-{3-[5-cyano-1-(4-fluorophenyl)-1,3-dihydro-2-benzofuran-1-yl] propyl} formamide.

19. The process of claim 15, wherein recovered escitalopram contains less than about 0.01 weight percent of N-{3-[5-cyano-1-(4-fluorophenyl)-1,3-dihydro-2-benzofuran-1-yl] propyl} formamide.

20. Escitalopram containing less than about 0.01 weight percent of N-{3-[5-cyano-1-(4-fluorophenyl)-1,3-dihydro–2-benzofuran-1-yl] propyl} formamide. which escitalopram has been prepared by a process comprising methylation of an amine using a mixture of formic acid and formaldehyde.